News-item 'US playing India card to curb China Beijing Magazine'

2029. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in the 'Economic Times' dated 25th June, 2001 under the caption "US playing India card to curb China Beijing Magazine";

(b) if so, Government's reactions thereto;

(c) whether Government have received any formal communication from the Chinese Government in this regard and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether Government would reiterate the basic principles of India's foreign policy to emphasize its desire to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with all foreign countries, so as to remove the misgivings which the Chinese Government harbour on this count?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) India-US relations are neither directed against any country nor are they at the expense of our friendly relations with any other country.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Economy in foreign office establishments

2030. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Hindustan Times dated the 6th July, 2001 under the caption "Economising is foreign to their mission";

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to address the problem raised in the news-item in order to ensure a modicum of accountability and a mindset for economy in the Foreign Office establishments in and outside the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Ministry of External Affairs is conscious of the need to economise and all expenditure at Headquarters and Missions/ Posts abroad is subject to check by Audit Authorities. The Ministry reviews, on a regular basis, the manpower requirements of Headquarters and of Missions/Posts abroad keeping in view the dynamics of foreign policy objectives in different parts of the globe. Eleven Missions have been closed down in the course of the last decade with a view to cutting down on expenditure. 175 posts in different grades have been abolished in Missions/Posts abroad and at the Headquarters of the Ministry during the course of the last one year.

The Ministry has also been actively pursuing a policy of purchase/ construction of properties abroad with a view to curtailing expenditure on hiring of residential accommodation. The Ministry has also taken various steps, in line with Ministry of Finance guidelines, to economise expenditure, *viz.* a 10% cut in the non-plan/non-salary expenditure, 25% reduction in rates of DA for local tours by officers abroad and a complete ban on purchase of new vehicles.

Problems of Indians living in Nepal

2031. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "Indians in Nepal homeward bound" appearing in the "Statesman" dated 5th July 2001;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to address the problems of the Indians settled in Nepal as highlighted in the news item?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Yes Sir. Government has seen the report which appeared in the Statesman of July 5, 2001. There have been reports of some families temporarily shifting their establishments from the Kathmandu valley to safer places in the aftermath of the tragic incident on June 1, 2001